1490. d. 29.

A

TESTIMONY

CONCERNING

George Ruſſel,

Who Dyed a Priſoner upon Truth's account for bearing his Teſtimouy againſt

TYTHES.

Together with a Few Lines once more (after many) by way of Information, Caution and Warning unto all Perſecutors, from the Example of the *Jews*, To beware what they do, how they perſiſt and go on in ſuch Practices, leſt the Judgments of the Juſt God take hold on them, and there be none to deliver out of his Hand. For certainly he will ariſe ere long in his Anger, and plead his own Cauſe in the Earth; and then he will eaſe himſelf of his Adverſaries, and be avenged upon his Enemies.

Theſe to all People may inform;

THat *George Ruſſel*, of the Pariſh of *Burliſcombe* in the County of *Devon*, being Aged about Eighty Three Years (whoſe Body is now Reſcued by the God of

Heaven

Heaven and Earth, from the Envy and Rage of his Cruel Perſecutors; and as concerning him, that Teſtimony is now finiſhed, his Soul being gathered unto God, and to the Spirits of Juſt Men who formerly ſuffered, he now ſleepeth and is at Reſt with them, where the Wicked ceaſe from troubling, and where the Weary be at Reſt, where the Priſoners Reſt together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppreſſor.) He for Conſcience ſake in Obedience to the Commands of Chriſt, refuſing to pay Tythes to one *William Chamberline*, alias *Luckly*, of the ſame Pariſh, Tythemenger, for about one Acre and —— of Wheat (the Tythe of which is valued to be worth about 7 s.) was ſubpœned into the *Exchequer*, and for not Appearing, a Writ was taken out againſt him to attach and impriſon his Body, in the Name of one *Anne Jones* Widow of *Greencham* in the Pariſh of *Aſhbritle* and County of *Somerſet*, Impropriator of the Tythe of *Burliſcombe* aforeſaid. And about the 17th day of the 4th moneth, 1679. his Body was attached, and committed unto Priſon in *Thomas* Pariſh in *Exon*, where he remained a Priſoner about ſeven or eight Weeks; in which time of his being there, ſome Friend of his conſidering his Age, and perceiving the Weakneſs of his Body, in tender Love and Reſpect to him, he being ſeveral Miles diſtant from his Children, who ſhould take Care of him as Age and Weakneſs doth require, thought good to ſeek his Releaſment, which was accordingly obtained: But the Adverſary not regarding his Age, Weakneſs, nor the Ground of his detaining Tythe (which was only for Conſcience ſake) nor the Smalneſs of the Sum demanded to be due (which if *G. R.* had paid, he muſt make Shipwrack of a Good Conſcience and Peace with God) in much Hardneſs of Heart by this Adverſary the Action was again revived, and another Attachment came forth, and his Body was apprehended and carryed unto Priſon upon the 11th of the 12th moneth, 1679. and there he remained Priſoner about eleaven Weeks (having ſome Liberty from the Keeper to be without the Keys) until the Second day of the 3d Moneth, 1680. and then (it being the Firſt day of the Week) in the Morning Weakneſs coming on much upon him, ſo that before any could ſend for his Children to come unto him he gave up the Ghoſt, and Peaceably Dyed (as many

Hearts

Hearts are perſwaded) in the Love and Favour of God, yielding up his Spirit unto him that gave it, there being preſent with him at that time, another Friend, by Name *Robert Welch*, who hath been alſo in the Sheriffs Cuſtody, a Priſoner ſeveral Years, and ſtill remaineth there upon the Account of Tythes. And now his Body being removed from off the Earth, and his Bed made in the Duſt, his Life ſhall Reign in Dominion over the Hearts of his Adverſaries: And by Death he having Overcome and gotten Victory over them all, through Chriſt, who hath ſtrengthened him; and having thus Suffered for him, ſhall undoubtedly Reign with him in that Glory at the Right Hand of God, where-with the Son was Glorified with the Father from the Beginning, where the Deſtroying, Perſecuting Spirit ſhall never come.

And his Teſtimony to the Truth againſt Tythes, he having thus ſuffered in Priſon till Death for it, hath as it were in ſome ſence ſealed it with his Bloods and it ſhall ſtand as a Memorial, and ſtanding Teſtimony recorded to Ages and Generations to come, againſt and over all the Heads of ſuch Perſecuting Prieſts, Impropriators and Tythemongers whatſoever, who endeavour to make void the Law of Chriſt, and the Goſpel of Chriſt; and who walk contrary to him, and are not found treading in his Foot-ſteps, nor in the Foot-ſteps of the Flock, *viz.* his Diſciples and the Primitive *Chriſtians*, who received not Tythes, neither Sued any man at the Law, nor caſt any in Priſon for the not Payment thereof: But otherwiſe their Lord and Maſter Chriſt commanded them, ſaying, *As ye go, Preach, ſaying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*, &c. *Mat.* 3. 2. *Freely ye have received, freely give; freely miniſter of the Ability God hath given to you, whether things Spiritual or Temporal* as alſo ſaith the Apoſtle.——And further ſaith Chriſt, *Into whatſoever City, Town or Houſe ye come, inquire who is Worthy, and if they receive you well, let your Peace then reſt upon it, and in the ſame Houſe remain eating and drinking ſuch things as they give; for the Labourer is worthy of his Hire; Go not from Houſe to Houſe. But if they receive you not*; What then? *Shake off the Duſt of your Shoes that cleaveth to your Feet as a Teſtimony againſt them; and it ſhall be* (ſaith Chriſt) *more tolerable for* Sodom *and* Gomorrah

rah *in the Day of Judgment than for that City*, Luke 10. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. as more largely in the Scriptures may be read.

So all may see how contrary such are, in Life and Conversation, in Work and Practice to the Doctrine of Christ, and to the practice of the Primitive *Christians* (though they pretend themselves to be *Christians*) who rake and plunder away by a Law the Goods of innocent sober People, and who cast in Prison their Bodies, and many times detain them there till Death. But certainly this will not serve their turn in the Day of Account, when God shall Judge the secrets of all Hearts; their Law then will not stand them by in any stead to appease or pacify the Anger and Wrath of God that will break forth upon such, if they Repent not; neither will it excuse them for their Cruelty in the sight of God, no more than did that Law which the wicked *Jews* made use of to crucifie Christ by, who thought they did well in putting him to Death, cryed out and said, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to dye: Crucifie him, Crucifie him; let his Blood be upon us and upon our Children.*

But some may say, *What Law had they?*

A Law given by *Moses* the Servant of God, *Lev.* 24. 16. *And he that blasphemeth the Name of the Lord shall surely be put to Death.*

Now the chief Priests and Elders falsly accusing Christ, said *he was a Blasphemer*: Why? *Because*, said they, *he hath made himself the Son of God.* Then said the High Priest, *He hath spoken Blasphemy; what further need have we of Witnesses? Behold now ye have heard his Blasphemy: What think ye? They Answered and said, He is guilty of Death.*

So in some sense it is with many in this Nation, who cry out, and say, *Tythes* (that unjust Oppression, under which the Nation groans) *are our Due, we have a Law for it; and though there is a People that for Conscience sake refuse to pay it, and say, its not our Due by the Law of God and Christ* (though you claim it by the Law of Man) *yet say we* (Priests and Impropriators) *by our Law they ought to Pay, if not, they shall surely Suffer, we will prosecute the Law; And as for the Judgments of God that*

may

may enſue therefore, either here or hereafter, we'l venture it, let them fall on us: And as to the Curſe that may follow for our Cruelty; if any be, let that reſt upon our Poſterity. Well, if of ſuch a mind, who ever thou art, mind a little further, and conſider the ſad ſtate afterwards of thoſe Perſecuting, Mudering *Jews*, (of whom Chriſt ſaid, *It was almoſt impoſſible for a Prophet or a man of God to Periſh but amongſt them*) of whom once Tythes under the Law were required, and freely without any Carnal Compulſion was it then to be brought into the place appointed; and it was for ſuch uſes and purpoſes as God by his Servant *Moſes* had ordained it in that Day: which Tythes and Offerings under that *Levitical* Diſpenſation, Prieſthood and Miniſtry, when thus brought into the Store-Houſes, were allotted for the Tribe of *Levi*, who had no Inheritance or ſhare of Land among their Brethren, and who ſerved the Tabernacle, and who waited on the Altar, and alſo for the Relief of the Poor, the Strangers, the Fatherleſs, and the Widows that were within their Gates. So then not only for the Prieſts to enrich themſelves thereby, nor to Feed and Cloath themſelves only with the Profits thereof; Nay, nay: Nor yet for greedy Impropriators, who through Covetouſneſs, and for the Love of Money, which is the Root of all Evil, that they might build their Neſts high, and be greater in the Earth, by joyning Houſe to Houſe, and by adding Field to Field, purchaſed to themſelves (meeting with a cheap Bargain) as their Inheritance, that which was other mens Rights; and now ſuch live upon, as may be ſaid, the Labour and and Sweat of other mens Brows, which Purchaſe they never had from God, Truth and Equity any juſt Right unto, nor by the Law of *Moſes* can demand or recover it; for at that time theſe things were accounted Holy things, and as Offerings were to be dedicated to the Lord; not to be Bought, not to be Sold, not to be Set or Let after ſuch a manner, unto Impropriators, Tythemongers or Farmers, there was no ſuch Doings then—neither did *Moſes* ordain a Priſon to caſt mens Bodies in if they brought not in their Tythes according to appointment, nor did he or the Magiſtrates then iſſue forth Writs, Warrants and Executions (as the men of our Nation have done) that Wicked Prophane Bailiffs, and ſuch like, ſhould take mens Goods away by force,

force, who are, many of them, of the vileſt of men, who matter not to make what Havock and Spoil they can, of what men have Honeſtly and Induſtriouſly Laboured for, and many times they will take three times more than what they can demand: See, ſee, O People! ſee how far ſhort of the *Jewiſh* Religion to theſe men come; and on the other hand (may it not be ſaid) how far Worſe and more Cruel than the *Jews* do the Practices of theſe pretended *Chriſtians* herein exceed!

And yet all this is done and ſuffered to be done in this Nation under a Profeſſion of the Goſpel, and of Chriſtianity, and under pretence of Laws made by Chriſtian-Magiſtrates, who think to uphold their Chriſtian-Miniſters (as they ſuppoſe) thereby; and ſo hereby they have much ſtrengthened the hands of all cruel perſecuting Prieſts and Impropriators, who are ready enough to take the utmoſt Advantage that the Law will give them herein againſt ſuch Honeſt Sober People: all which Doings are very contrary unto the Mind of God, who hateth Oppreſſion, and to the Command of Chriſt Jeſus, who came to ſet Free from the Yoke of Bondage; and to the Scriptures of Truth, which do not at all juſtifie them; & alſo to that very Law and Diſpenſation that came by *Moſes*, which never did allow of ſuch Practices as theſe, who in that very Day, as on this account, annexed no corporal Penalty thereunto, but left the People under the ſenſe of the Severity of that Judgment, Curſe or Puniſhment, that God himſelf might inflict upon them, if they were Diſobedient herein, and did not anſwer to do what God thus required of them in the time of that Diſpenſation, which if they did, then on the other hand, the Bleſſing of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth was to come upon them. As its written, *Deut.* 28. *And it ſhall come to paſs, if thou ſhalt hearken diligently unto the Voice of the Lord thy God, to obſerve and to do all his Commands, which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will ſet thee on High, above all the Nations of the Earth; and all theſe Bleſſings ſhall come upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou ſhalt hearken unto the Voice of the Lord thy God; Bleſſed ſhalt thou be in the City, and bleſſed ſhalt thou be in the Field, in the Fruit of thy Body, and in the Fruit of thy Ground, &c. Bleſſed ſhall be thy Basket and thy Store;*

Store; Bleſſed ſhalt thou be when thou goeſt out, and when thou comeſt in, &c.

But a little further conſider, as hath been hinted to, the ſad State of that People and Nation the *Jews*, in and ſoon after the dayes of Chriſt, who came to Fulfil the Law, and to put an End to Tythes, Oblations and Offerings, and to aboliſh that *Levitical* Prieſt-hood and Worſhip, and to ſet up and eſtabliſh a better, to bring People to Worſhip and Serve God in Spirit and in Truth, for ſuch Worſhip and Worſhippers the Father ſeeketh, and is well-pleaſed with, concerning which, much might be written: Oh! that all ſorts of Perſecutors whatſoever would but conſider what Judgments and Calamities ſoon after came upon them for their Evil Works, in that they Deſpiſed, Reſiſted, Oppoſed and Rejected Chriſt; Hal'ed before Magiſtrates, Abuſed, Impriſoned and put to Death them that were his Diſciples; and as the Scriptures teſtifie, *Crucified him their Lord and Maſter, the Prince of Life and Peace, whom the World knew not, nor the Princes of it; for if they had* (as its written) *they would not have Crucified the Lord of Glory*, and that after the moſt Vileſt manner, delivering him up to be Buffetted, and his Perſon to be Abuſed; they cloathed him in Purple, and crowned him with Thorns, Mocked at him with a Salutation, *Hale King of the Jews*, Spit in his Face, and Bowing their Knees, Revilingly Worſhipped him; and ſome ſmote him with the Palms of their Hands, ſaying, *Prophecy now whom it is that ſmiteth thee*: gave him Vineger to drink mingled with Gall; and thus Scoffing at him, and wagging their Heads, ſaid, *He ſaved others, let him now ſave himſelf: If he be the Son of God, let him now come down from the Croſs*; who was Crucified between two Thieves: And all this was done unto him, that they might to the uttermoſt, as much as in them lay, Trample under, Contemn and Deſpiſe his Glory: So that the Saying of the Prophet was fulfilled, as its written, *He was Oppreſſed, and he was Afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth: He is brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter, and as a Sheep before her Shearers is Dumb, ſo he openeth not his Mouth. —— He hath poured out his Soul unto Death, and was numbered with the Tranſgreſſors*, as many of the Innocent Servants of Chriſt in ſome reſpect have been, and are now in this Age and Generation,

Generation, accounted as Evil-doers, numbered with Tranſgreſſors of the Law, Seditious, Stubborn, Rebellious People, Plotters and Contrivers of Inſurrections, and ſuch like; brought before the Magiſtrates of the Nation, and as ſuch, by ſome of them, they have been Fined, and their Goods Spoiled, their Bodies Impriſoned, and caſt into ſtinking Goals with Thieves, Murderers and other Malefactors, and many of them have there lain and ſuffered Impriſonment till Death, for Truth's-ſake and good Conſcience-ſake, both towards God and Man. And of all which ſlanderous Accuſations, that they have thus falſly charged them with, the God of Heaven beareth them Record, and his Light in all Conſciences doth teſtifie, that they are a Harmleſs Innocent People, clear from all ſuch things: Oh! that the Magiſtrates and People of this Nation would but conſider! Oh! that they would but lay it to heart a little, what happened ſoon afterward unto that People and Nation, the *Jews*, who in that day Abuſed the Servants and Meſſengers of Truth (concerning whom Chriſt ſaid, *It ſhall be better for ſuch that a Mill-ſtone were hanged about their Necks, and that they were caſt into the Sea and drowned, than that they ſhould offend one of theſe little Ones*) and alſo who Crucified Chriſt the Prince of Life and Glory, deſpiſing him, ſaid, *We will not have this Man to Rule over us he ſhall not be our King*; *away with him, Crucifie him*; *Releaſe unto us* Barrabas; as much as to ſay, Let Thieves, Murderers and other Malefactors have their Liberty, and be ſet Free before him; ſecure him, let him not go, Puniſh him ſeverely by the Law, take his Life from him; he is a Blaſphemer, he ought to dye; who indeed was the Son of God, and an Innocent man, Holy, Harmleſs, Separate from Sin, whoſe Life and Converſation among the *Jews* in Righteouſneſs did ſhine, and was without Spot, Pure and Clean, in whoſe Heart there was found no Deceit, and in whoſe Mouth there was found no Guile; and yet all this was done unto that Juſt One, who in the Sence and Fore-ſight of his Enemies Miſery, and that Calamity which was coming upon them, having Bowels of Pity and Compaſſion, tenderly Weeped and Lamented over them, as its written; *O* Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem! *thou that Killeſt the Prophets, Abuſeſt and Stoneſt them that are ſent unto thee*; *how often would I have gathered thy Children together, even*

even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! behold, your Houſe is left unto you Deſolate: Oh! if thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes; now thy Day is over, now the time of thy Viſitation is paſt, now thy Judgment is at hand: Oh! thou Fooliſh People and Nation, who didſt Reject, Deſpiſe and Wonder, now thou art nigh to Periſhing.

And may it not be ſaid concerning ſome, in the ſame Spirit of Lamentation, which he hath poured forth in theſe Latter-dayes upon his Sons and Daughters; and he being aſcended up on High, and leading Captivity Captive, hath made them Partakers of, in and by which it may be ſaid, Oh fooliſh People of this Nation, Perverſe and Unwiſe, ye who have been Fighters againſt God, and Oppoſers of his Truth; ye who have Rejected his Light, and Reſiſted his Grace that bringeth Salvation, which to all men hath appeared; ye who have deſpiſed the Truth, and wondered at the Appearance of it; ye who have Slighted, Reviled, Impriſoned and Abuſed the Servants and Profeſſors of it; May you not fear that ye are nigh unto Periſhing, that your Calamity is at hand? May you not dread that the Day of your Viſitation is over, and that Diſtreſs and Trouble as a Whirlewind is coming upon you? May you not fear that your Habitations and goodly Scituations, may be laid Waſte, your Houſes may be left unto you Deſolate, and that your End may be Everlaſting Miſery? Oh ye fooliſh People! not deſiring the Truth, not willing to be gathered; for accordingly the thing came to paſs upon the *Jews*, as it was ſaid by Chriſt in the dayes of his Fleſh, unto whom all Judgment is committed and given, both in Heaven and in Earth, who ſhall judge both Quick and Dead, as its written, and who changeth not, but is the ſame ſtill, yeſterday, to day, and for evermore, who will come ſpeedily, and his Reward is with him, to recompence every man according to his Deeds, and according to his Works; *Mercy to whom Mercy belongs, and Judgment to whom Judgment is due; Fury to his Enemies, and Vengeance upon the Heads of his Adverſaries*, as its written, *Judgment is mine, I will Recompence, and Vengeance is mine, I will Repay*, ſaith the Lord.

This

This is written in Love to Truth, and the Souls of Men, by one who desireth, that Truth and Righteousness may enter, and that Justice and Equity may take place more and more in the Hearts of many People in this Nation, and else-where, who am known to some by the Name of

Written about the 8th of the 3d Moneth, 1680.

Robert Ford.

The Testimony of *Jasper Batt* for *GEORGE RUSSEL.*

I Have well known the said *George Russel* for more than twenty years past, and since my Knowledge of him I have this Testimony for him, That in the general he was a man of an Honest Harmless Conversation towards all men, loving his Neighbour as himself, and willing to do to all men as he would they should do unto him; he received Truth in the Love of it; he was a man of a very Tender Spirit, being often melted into Tears in the sense of the Lord's Presence, and Love of God towards him; and made it his Concern in his Capacity to gather & bring others to the Knowledge & Enjoyment of the same Love, often visiting his Neighbours and Acquaintance, inviting and perswading them to accept of, and not to neglect the Day of their Visitation, putting them in mind of their Latter-end and Day of Account; inviting and calling upon his Neighbours and Friends, as Opportunity might be had, to come and hear the Declaration of Truth, freely giving up himself and all that he had for its Service, it being the Joy of his Heart to obtain an Opportunity to be serviceable to the Lord and his People, and to Receive and En-

Entertain the Lord's Servants, eſpecially ſuch whom the Lord ſent forth as Labourers in his Vineyard; and the Lord's Bleſſing in all was with him; for he ſaw Truth's Proſperity, and many of his Acquaintance brought to the Knowledge of it. He was faithful in his Teſtimony againſt the Falſe Worſhips and Vain Cuſtoms of the World, and in particular againſt that great Oppreſſion of TYTHES, wherein his Concern was but ſmall, having but a ſmall Eſtate as to the outward; and though the Matter was but ſmall on that account required of him, yet he choſe rather to lay down his Life a Priſoner, than to make ſhipwrack of a good Conſcience.

And I cannot well omit the taking notice of the Sottiſh Cruelty and Deſperate Hardneſs of his Adverſary (not often to be paralell'd) who not regarding his Age of Eighty Three Years, his Weakneſs (which uſually attends ſuch Old Age) the Smallneſs of the Sum required, or that by their Law might be due, (*viz.*) Seven or Eight Shillings, nor the Ground or Cauſe of his Refuſal to pay it, which was only for Good Conſcience ſake, of which he could not make Shipwrack for all the Riches of this World; however (it ſeems) ſuch was the Hard-hearted Cruelty of this Adverſary (as being of that Generation whoſe Tender Mercies are Cruel) he *reſolved to have his Tythes or his Life.* But honeſt *G. R.* choſe rather to lay down this Mortal Life than hazard the Loſs of Everlaſting Life. He was a man greatly ſatisfied in the Love of God towards him, and in the Proſperity of the Lord's Work, and of a very Contented and Chearful Life and Converſation, even living above Viſible Things. I was with him in the time of his late Impriſonment, where though he was weak and feeble of Body, lying on the Bed, yet he manifeſted great Joy and Gladneſs of Spirit, rejoycing in the Goodneſs and Love of God towards him, ſaying, *It was never better with him.*

And ſo having ſealed his Teſtimony with his Life, his Memorial is bleſſed, and his innocent harmleſs Life, his tender melting Spirit, and the often appearance of the Springs of Life in him, and the precious Fellowſhip which therein we enjoyed with him, ſtill yields a good Savour to many of the Lord's Faithful Ones which are left behind, and is freſh in our Remembrance, and

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though dead, herein he yet lives amongſt us, and we refreſht in the ſenſe and feeling thereof.

And ſo, let his Name ſtand recorded amongſt the Noble Army of the Lamb's Followers, as one of them who loved not his Life to the Death, and hath overcome through Sufferings, by the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of his Teſtimony, and is now with the Lord's Redeemed Ones on *Mount Sion*, where there is an End of Sorrow and Suffering, and all Tears are wip't away; and where everlaſting Praiſes and Halelujah, Honour, Dominion and Thankſgiving are ſounded forth and returned to the Lord, and to the Lamb, who was dead and is alive, who ſits upon the Throne, and lives and raigns over all forever and for evermore, *Amen*.

The 21th of the 4th Moneth, 1680. *Jaſper Batt.*

THE END.